

**GROWING FOR GOD'S GLORY
THROUGH EDUCATION
THE MILLENNIAL VISION
OF
ST. JAMES AME CHURCH**

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MILLENNIAL VISION GROWTH GOALS

- Goal 1*** It is our desire to become a praying church that is filled with the knowledge and wisdom of God (Col. 1:9) and operates in all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom.12:6-8, I Cor. 12:4-11, 27-31)
- Goal 2*** We should work and witness to increase the membership of the church with persons seeking to reach full maturity as followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- Goal 3*** Our goal is to become a church where 100% of the members are tithers.

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VISION OF GROWTH

In the famous movie Quo Vadis that came out in the 1950's there is a climactic scene when the apostle Peter is fleeing Rome because persecution has broken out against the Christian Church in Rome. On the road that leads away from Rome, he has a vision of the risen Christ. When Peter sees the Lord Jesus he falls to his knees and asks, "Quo Vadis Domini?" or "Whither Thou goest Lord?" Our Lord replies that he is on his way to Rome to be crucified all over again. Peter understands that Christ's words are a personal indictment to him. Jesus is returning to Rome to stand with the Church because Peter has deserted his place of leadership and is fleeing in panic. Peter arises from his knees and returns to Rome to stand with and provide leadership for the believers who are undergoing persecution and facing death.

Since 1987, St. James A.M.E. Church has been laboring with the vision to build a secondary preparatory school. We praise God for the vision and for the victory. However, now that St. James Preparatory is built and operational, the question arises "Quo vadis, Domini?" Or "whither Thou goest Lord?" Or, where is the Lord leading us in the days ahead? Are we to rest on the laurels of St. James Prep or are we to seek *God's* direction concerning the next steps in God's unfolding vision for St. James? I happen to believe

that God has a specific vision and unique purpose for every human life and for every Christian church and community of faith. Are we asking the Lord, “Quo vadis, Domini” or “whither Thou goest Lord?” or are we following our own vision or mind, or the perceptions of others, or the constraints that our society, culture and environment have imposed upon us?

In my efforts as pastor to wrestle with the question of the next steps in God’s unfolding vision for St. James, I have been led to the subject of *Christian Growth and Maturity*. Second Peter 3: 18 admonishes us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.” Our vision here at St. James is to **“grow fully mature Christians through spirituality, education, stewardship and service.”** Thus, **“as the redeemed people of God called Church, our mission is to grow fully mature followers for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We believe that full growth and maturity includes the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our time, talents, tithes and offerings.”**

GROWING FOR GOD’S GLORY

As we *Grow for God’s Glory*, we believe that God wants us to grow spiritually as individuals and as a church. We grow spiritually

as the Holy Spirit leads us to deeper levels in prayer, the study of God's Word, praise and worship, service and other spiritual disciplines such as fasting. We believe that our spiritual development does not stand in isolation from the rest of our lives but impacts every aspect of who we are and what we do. It is the foundation that empowers us to move from being only hearers of God's Word to becoming doers of God's Word, also (James 1:22). Moreover, our spiritual growth enables us to experience and receive from God all that God has to offer because we know that there is no limit to God and nothing too hard for God to do. Therefore, it is our desire to become a praying church that is filled with the knowledge and wisdom of God (Col. 1:9) and operates in all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12: 6-8; I Cor. 12: 4-11, 27-31).

As we *Grow for God's Glory*, we believe that God wants us to grow numerically as individuals and as a church. The Holy Spirit desires to add much to the quality of our individual lives. We believe that God desires to add concrete material blessings to our lives. So often we live beneath our privilege because we have not grasped the fact that God has not only provided abundantly for eternal life but God is also the provider of abundant present life (John 10:10). We also believe that God desires to add great numbers to God's church - those who need to be saved. Just as God has saved us, God's desire is

that all would come to a saving knowledge of Him through Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3: 9). Therefore, we should work and witness to increase the membership of the church with persons seeking to reach full maturity as followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We grow numerically as a church through our witness and service.

We believe that God wants us to grow financially. We believe that God desires believers to prosper and do well in all things - in health and in wealth, in body and soul, spiritually and financially (Deut. 28: 1-8; III Jn. 2). We believe that the key to financial health and wholeness is in our giving and in our savings. We believe that the minimum standard for giving is the biblical standard of the tithe, ten percent of our gross income. According to the scriptures the tithe opens up the windows of heaven for outpouring of unexpected blessings (Mal. 3: 10). We believe that as we tithe, God will help us to manage the 90% that we have left to the point that we will prosper spiritually, financially, and in health. We believe that we can do more with God helping us to manage the 90% that we have left after the tithe than we can do on our own with 100%. We believe that proper management of the 90% that we have left after the tithe involves savings and investments. We believe that as our members tithe and are blessed, the church will also be blessed because there will be sufficient resources to meet the needs of ministry and service.

Therefore, our goal is to become a church where 100% of the members are tithers who will allow God to help them manage the remaining 90%.

THE EDUCATIONAL VISION

However, the question arises, how do we as believers learn about the savings, investments, and management of our resources, both in terms of health and finances? How do we grow in prayer and in our understanding of God's word? How do we arrive at a better knowledge and understanding of the Holy Spirit? How do we learn to witness about our faith? What do some of the things that we say that we believe really mean? What does full Christian growth and maturity really mean to us as individuals? How are we as believers equipped for service and a better quality of life, as we grow older and as we live out the implications of our faith in the twenty first century?

To answer these questions and other concerns we need teaching. From the inception of the Church, a foundation of dynamic preaching, empowering worship and sound teaching was laid. In I Corinthians 12:28, Paul writes, "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets and third teachers". The apostle was the one who established a community of faith, the local church that would be the center of corporate worship. The prophet was the one

who proclaimed “what thus saith the Lord”. The teacher was the one who instructed the believers in the faith. The early church realized that it was necessary not only to proclaim Jesus as Lord and worship Him as such, but also to instruct believers in how to live out their faith. A Christian needed to believe in the Jesus that was proclaimed (Rom. 10: 9), belong to a church (Heb. 10:25) that worshipped God in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24), and be instructed in the Word of God (II Tim. 3:14-17).

At St. James, we have worked and prayed hard to create a dynamic worship environment and preaching ministry. We regularly review and revise the order of worship and strive to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in all of our services. I have personally vowed to you to always stand before you with a prepared and prayed over message. I have raised that standard for myself, for every minister on the pulpit staff and for every guest preacher I invite. Worship and preaching, we do well. But, we have not put the same emphasis or given the same attention to the teaching. It is in the area of teaching and instruction that God has directed my focus and given a new vision.

Like the early church, we, too, need Christian education that is biblically based, spiritually sound, and practical in terms of its application. The prophet Hosea said of those who lived in his time

that, “my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”(Hos. 4:6). Many of us are not reaching our potential as individual believers and many of us are still in bondage, not because we are bad people - we just have not been taught. We have not been taught the spiritual disciplines that will help us in our daily battles with the enemy. Many of us become so easily confused not because we are dumb or dull witted by nature - we just have not been taught. We do not know the scriptures and so we cannot intelligently or effectively understand them and thus apply them to our daily living. We are not prospering, not because we were born under some unlucky sign or star and not because there is something defective in our genes or deterministic about our environment from which we cannot escape - we simply have not been taught sound Christian principles of financial management. We need to unlearn and relearn some of the things that we have been taught about money and its uses.

Therefore, after much prayer and reflection I have reached the conclusion that God’s vision for St. James is that it become a major teaching as well as worshipping and serving church. The Lord has shown me that one of the ways that we will grow as individuals and as a church is through teaching and education. St. James Prep has helped establish our role as a leader in secular education. In the same way, our church needs to be seen as an educational leader in terms of

Christian teachings and principles. We are known for our worship. We are known for our service and involvement in the community. The Lord has shown me that we also need to be known for the quality of our teaching and educational life. A teaching church or educational entity not only prepares its own members for effective Christian living and service, but it also serves as a resource for equipping other believers for ministry in their respective churches. This means that our emphasis on education will have both an internal and external component.

Internally, this means that we will be strengthening as well as expanding our present educational offerings found in the Sunday School, New Life Ministries, the Lay Organization, Missionary Society, and Bible Studies. We will develop a comprehensive Christian education program that offers introductory, continuing and advanced/specialized areas of instruction. This also means that we will spend more time in training the leadership of our church.

Externally, this means that we will offer courses in the areas of Spiritual Development, Christian Leadership and Witness, and Christian Stewardship and Economic Development such as:

- Spiritual Development
 - Introduction to the New Testament & Old Testament

- What Christians Believe: Introduction to Theology
- The Spiritual Discipline of Fasting
- Biblical Languages: Hebrew and NT Greek
- Christian Leadership and Witness
 - Principles of Christian Leadership
 - Identifying and Utilizing Your Spiritual Gifts
 - Preaching and Sermon Development
 - Show and Tell: An Introduction to Christian Witnessing
 - The Christian Family
- Christian Stewardship and Economic Development
 - Breaking the Yoke of Financial Bondage: An Introduction to Christian Money Management
 - Investment Basics
 - Retirement Planning
 - Home Buying

These courses will not only be open to our church but to other members of the larger community. In times past, we offered advanced bible courses and other courses through the St. James Bible Institute. In view of the expanded emphasis on our educational mission, the St. James Bible Institute will be renamed the St. James Christian Learning Center.

We believe that full Christian maturity and development is a life long process. We believe that we ought to be learning something new as long as we live. We believe that when we stop learning we not only stop growing but we also start dying from the inside out. We believe the unsearchable riches of Christ and the well springs of our faith have so much food and drink in them that we will never be able to exhaust them. The word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit always has a fresh word for us and something new to teach us about the truth and about life.

INSTITUTING THE VISION

The person who will be primarily responsible for instituting the educational vision for this church will be our Executive Minister, Rev. Raquel St. Clair. She will oversee all internal educational offerings and staffing, as well as organize and administer the St. James Christian Learning Center. For some time, I have desired to see the St. James Bible Institute expanded to become a Christian Learning Center. For St. James to become the teaching entity that the Holy Spirit has shown me, we need a staff person whose primary responsibility will be to focus on this particular aspect of the vision. Rev. St. Clair, in her role as Executive Minister, will focus primarily on education and thereby meet this need. In addition, she will

represent the Senior Pastor in his absence at community functions, supervise seminary interns, and assist the Church Administrator, Mrs. Delores Johnson in grant writing and proposal development and perform other duties as assigned by the Senior Pastor.

FUNDING THE VISION

To make the millennial vision for our church with its emphasis on education a reality, to meet the other financial obligations facing our church and the Prep School, to do biblically based ministry, and to enhance the growth of our individual members, we are asking all of our members to embrace the following Seven Point Plan for Support, Growth and Service:

1. **TITHE** - We are again asking all of our members to tithe as a way of life. During much of this year we have been celebrating ACTS (All Church Tithing Sundays) on the first Sunday of the month. If there are those who are not yet prepared to tithe out of every paycheck, we are asking that everyone continue to tithe at least once a month. During this past year we cancelled the Fall Rally. If we continue to tithe as a way of life or if everyone tithes at least once a month, we will also delete the Spring Rally and Conference Budget envelopes.

2. **SAVE** - As part of our growth and financial planning we are encouraging each of our members to give a dime out of every dollar, which is the tithe, and then to save a dime out of every dollar. Out of every dollar, we are encouraging every member to give the first dime to God, the second dime to self, and live off of the eighty cents. If we give God the first fruits and ourselves the second fruits, we believe that God will help us manage the rest. We encourage our members to invest in the St. James Federal Credit Union. As part of the St. James Christian Learning Center we will be offering courses on Financial Management.
3. **BE A BLESSING** - As the need to feed and clothe persons in our community expands, we are asking each of our members to participate in the *Be A Blessing Campaign*. The donations that are received through the *Be A Blessing Campaign* provide the Thanksgiving and Christmas Food Baskets and the Christmas toys for those in need. We do not ask our members to personally give, unless they are led to do so. Instead, we ask each member to ask their friends, relatives and others for money to feed the needy.

4. **THANK OFFERING** - On the last Sunday of the year, we ask every member to give a special offering of Thanksgiving to God in appreciation for the blessings that God has poured into our lives during the past year. No set amount is asked. Every member must ask God to direct him or her in the giving of an offering of thanksgiving and praise.
5. **SPIRIT LED GIVING** - We will continue to ask our members to participate in Spirit led giving regarding the other appeals that are made throughout the year.
6. **ST. JAMES PREPARATORY SCHOOL** - To meet the ongoing obligations of St. James Prep. and to continue to solidify its financial base, we need 500 members to give at least \$1,000 a year beyond their tithes and offerings. That is \$250 per quarter, or \$84 a month, or \$20 a week. For those members who cannot afford to give the \$1,000 a year we are asking 200 members to give at least \$500 a year beyond tithes and offerings for the support of St. James Prep. That is \$125 per quarter, or \$42 a month, or \$10 a week. You may pay in whatever manner is convenient to you - weekly, monthly, quarterly or as a lump sum.

7. **RECRUITMENT** - We are also asking every member to recruit at least one student to attend St. James Prep. Students in grades 7-10 are eligible to apply.

CONCLUSION

“Quo vadis, Domini?...Whither thou goest, Lord?” “Quo vadis, St. James...Whither thou goest, St. James?” We go forward to the new millennium *Growing for God's Glory*. We go forward striving for full Christian maturity through spirituality, education, stewardship and service. We go forward to the new millennium growing spiritually, numerically, and financially. We go forward to the new millennium with enlightened heads and empowered hearts. We go forward to the new millennium from milk to meat, from strength to strength, from glory to glory. We go forward to the new millennium using education as one of our major means as we press toward the prize of the high calling of full maturity as believers. We go forward to the new millennium by living out the implications of II. Timothy 2: 15: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.”

We go forward to the new millennium remembering the admonition found in Ephesians 4: 14-16: “We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine,

by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."

We go forward to the new millennium in obedience to the great commission given by our Lord to his church:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (St. Matthew 28: 19-20).

Vision Statement

To grow fully mature Christians through Spirituality,
Education, Stewardship and Service.

Mission Statement

As the redeemed people of God called Church, our mission is to grow fully mature followers for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We believe that full growth and maturity includes the Lordship of Jesus Christ over our time, talents, tithes and offerings.

Motto

GROWING FOR GOD'S GLORY

Church & Personal Goals Worksheet

On this page and the following page you will find three sections that correspond to the three areas of personal church growth in which we focus. In the spaces provided, please list your personal and church goals for each of these areas. Your personal goals are those things you wish to grow in or accomplish in your individual life. Your church goals are those things that you will do to assist the church in fulfilling its vision of spiritual, numeric, and financial growth. Your goals should be measurable so that you can chart your progress. For example, do not write as a Spiritual goal, "to be more spiritual". Instead, list the measurable way(s) you can become spiritual e.g. read my Bible daily, pray everyday, etc.

God Wants Me To Grow *Spiritually*

Church Goal: To become a praying church that is filled with the knowledge and wisdom of God and operates in all of the new Testament gifts of the Holy Spirit.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Personal Goals: In order to grow spiritually, I commit myself to growing in these ways...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

God Wants Me To Grow *Numerically*

Church Goal: To increase the membership of the church with persons who are seeking to reach full maturity as followers of The Lord Jesus Christ.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Personal Goals: In order for the church to grow numerically, I will commit myself to witnessing to, praying for and inviting the following people to church...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

God Wants Me To Grow *Financially*

Church Goal: To become a church where 100% of the members are tithers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Personal Goals: In order to grow financially, I will commit myself to work towards these financial goals.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____